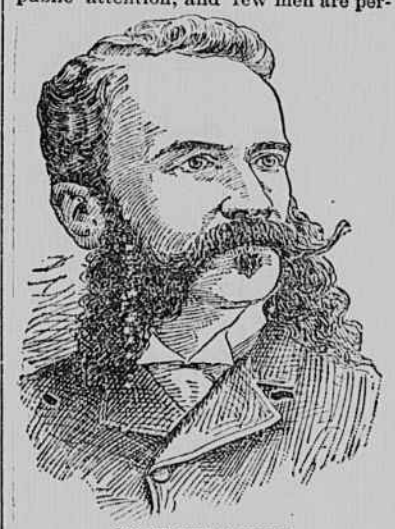
COUNT MITKIEWICZ.

HOW HE NEGOTIATED CERTAIN CONCESSIONS FROM CHINA.

The Count Converses with a Correspondent on His Experiences in the Celestial Empire—How He Dined with and Bribed the Prime Minister.

[Special Correspondence.]

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17.—Count Eugene Mitkiewicz is an interesting character. Few men within the past few years have occupied more of general public attention, and few men are personally more popular in Washington. Several years ago the count conceived the idea of going into that comparatively unknown country of the "heathen Chinee" and of obtaining certain valuable concessions for American capitalists.



COUNT MITKIEWICZ.

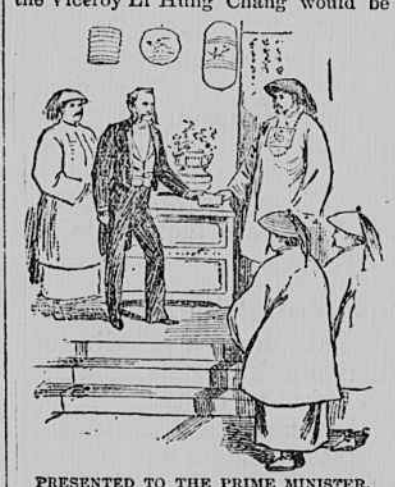
It never appears to have struck any other progressive and aggressive American that this was the greatest field probably in the world for investment. Here was a country with 400,000,000 inhabitants and an area so great that even the United States would be comparatively lost if placed in one corner. With all this population and with all this territory there was but one telegraph and one railroad, not a single telephone, no letter carrier system, no government mint, and, what was still more surprising, no system of governmental revenue.

The count determined to penetrate the barriers which had been raised about the Chinese empire principally by British capital and British enterprise.

The greatest difficulty encountered by the count in pushing his scheme was really in America. He first had to overcome the natural prejudice in this country against foreigners. His scheme also was so far away, and at the same time so gigantic in its conception and the results it promised, that many American capitalists who were approached were startled by its very magnitude. The first man to take hold of these Chinese concessions was no less a man than the prominent banker, Wharton Barker, of Philadelphia. Later the gigantic deal had for its supporters such men as Colonel Elliott F. Shepard and the Chinese minister at Washington.

So far the count has been unable to produce these Chinese concessions and deliver them over to his associates in the enterprise. But he has by no means despaired of accomplishing this result. In fact he said today that he regarded this as the work of his life and would certainly succeed before he died. The count claims that it is simply a battle between English and American enterprise and capital, and that, as a naturalized American, he is determined to see the thing brought to a successful conclusion. After many months of work the count finally sailed for China, backed not only by American capital, but with the letters of introduction which guaranteed to him an introduction and an audience with Li Hung Chang, the prime minister of the Chinese empire and the seventh prince, the uncle of the emperor. The count's remarkable experience in China reads like a fairy tale, and is best told in his own words. In describing it he said:

"On my arrival at Shanghai I was informed that shortly a steamer sent by the Viceroy Li Hung Chang would be



PRESENTED TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

placed at my disposal. The vessel was such as is used only by the royalty, and from this I was convinced that my letters of introduction to the Chinese officials were of the very best. I went unattended, and was compelled to rely altogether upon an interpreter whose services I secured in Shanghai. But it seems that the viceroy had issued an order that my person was sacred, and this doubtlessly accounts for the universal courtesy and attention I met with on every hand.

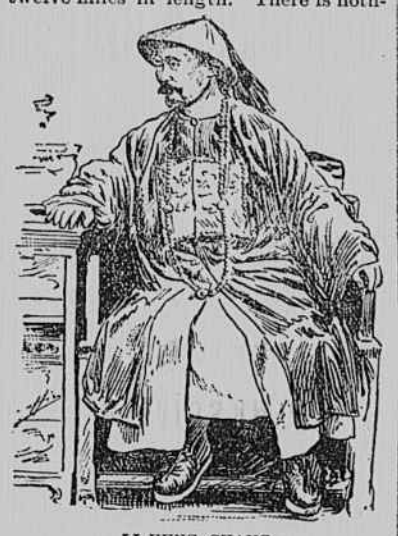
"I do not doubt but what this attention was very largely due to the lavish expenditure of money. It is a universal custom in China to pay tribute to everything and everybody, and in that country no official considers it a crime to accept a bribe. In fact they do not consider it as a bribe, but rather as one of their legitimate perquisites. I started in with the Chinamen who handled my luggage and worked my way up to the prime minister of the Chinese empire, and what with presents of costly silks and diamonds at the end of a two months' trip I found that my expenses had reached the enormous sum of twenty-five thousand odd dollars.

"A small fortune, you might say, and in truth it was, but in reality it was but the beginning. There has already been spent on these Chinese concessions certainly not less than $200,000, and it will take as much more to secure them. What will they be worth? No man can tell. Millions certainly, but how many? It takes one's breath away in very truth when he thinks of the possibility. Just think of the value today of the entire railroad system of the United States, the telegraph reaching into every hole and corner of the land, and the telephone system now in nearly every city of any size. Their value is billions of dollars—not millions. Such must ultimately be the value of the same kind of property in China, where there are 400,000,000 people, and where there is an area four times the size of the United States.

"Every Chinaman is on the make. I don't care how small he is officially, or how young he is in years, each and every one of them is after the mighty dollar. It matters not whether it is an American dollar or a British sovereign or a Chinese tael, it is all the same to the pigtail gentry of the empire. It is a very rare thing indeed for a foreigner to secure an audience with the prime minister of China; in fact it was even more difficult than securing an audience with James G. Blaine when he was secretary of state, and that, you know, was regarded as one of the most difficult things in Washington.

"I had a very indefinite idea of Chinese customs, and had assumed, with my American ideas, that being presented to the prime minister coupled with it a presentation to his immediate family. But I was doomed to disappointment. On my way from Shanghai to Peking I had heard a great deal about the wonderful beauty of the wives of Li Hung Chang, and had looked forward to the pleasure of meeting them. But during my entire interview with the minister I never set eyes on anything in the shape of Chinese womanhood, notwithstanding the fact that he has some twenty odd wives, each and every one of them with as much curiosity as any American woman that ever lived.

"I mentioned they had but one railroad in all China, and that, too, but twelve miles in length. There is noth-



LI HUNG CHANG.

ing, therefore, in the way of rapid transit there. You either have to go by boat or ride in a wagon train. Both are extremely slow, and an ordinary journey occupies two or three days. The aristocracy of China and all visitors who come with proper credentials are carried about the streets in litters. When I reached Peking they took me to a hotel and gave me a sumptuous apartment in which the predominating colors were red and yellow. The house was built of bamboo, the ceilings were low, but I must confess that everything about it was well built, and the effect on the whole could not help but be pleasing. I have heard it said that Chinamen know nothing of the harmony of color, but my experience is that they usually get an effect which is pleasing even to the artistic eye.

"I shall never forget my first supper in China. Of course I had to eat with chopsticks, and I do not doubt that my efforts to impress the attendants who were constantly about me with an idea that I was thoroughly accustomed to everything Chinese accounted largely for the many subdued smiles I noted on the stolid countenances of those who served me. I cannot say that this supper, or in fact any other meal of which I partook while in China, had that self satisfying result that good old fashioned beefsteak and potatoes have for me in America. To be perfectly frank, I went hungry most of the time, and that was my condition on the night I was presented to Li Hung Chang, the prime minister of China.

"Shortly after dark a high official of the government called upon me, and through my interpreter informed me that my presence was demanded at the imperial mansion. I had on my dress coat, which made me all the more out of keeping with the elaborate costumes of the richly clad Chinamen about me. Flanked on either side by one of these gayly dressed Chinamen, I marched out and found a litter carried by four sturdy natives. The litter was covered with a canopy upholstered in the richest of Chinese silk. On either side stood a swarthy Celestial, flaming torch in hand. As I approached the men bearing the litter sank to their knees, so that I might step aboard. When I was comfortably seated the curtains were drawn, the men rose, and the procession wended its way slowly to the house of Li Hung Chang. There was no crowding about by the common people, as there is in America, for the common people of China are subdued and disciplined like an army of soldiers. There is no gaping mob there.

"I had heard that the palace was a very beautiful building, but I was not prepared for the sight that met my gaze. It was ablaze with light, and there certainly must have been several thousand lanterns, for candle power is the only light used in China. It may seem incredible that a nation of 400,000,000, so much older than ours, and with such vast natural resources, should in the Nineteenth century be practically without railroads, without a telegraph, without a telephone, without any postal service and without any governmental mint. But it is still more incredible that they should be without anything in the way of light at night other than candle power. But the effect of this is certainly as pleasing as anything I have seen either in America or in Europe. The light of every candle shone through some gayly colored lantern, and over the whole scene there was that soft radiance which neither gas nor electricity can produce.

"However we of America may attempt to belittle the Chinaman, there is little justification for it. True it is he is far behind us in many ways, but he has abilities peculiarly his own, and whatever he does attempt he succeeds in. There is a great deal of what we call red tape in this country in everything official in China. You can get some idea of the formality of things when I tell you that before I reached the august presence of Li Hung Chang I was presented in turn to seven different officials, each higher than the one who presented me. Finally I reached the prime minister. By that time I was very much worked up, and scarcely able to make a good presentation of my case through the interpreter. But any nervousness that I may have felt was doubtless overcome by the rich presents I brought, and which were placed at Li Hung Chang's feet with great ceremony.

"My instructions had been to walk up to the foot of the throne, bend my knee and bow low. I did this and remained there until commanded to rise. Standing before the prime minister I stated my case with all the eloquence of which I was capable, and the fact that I was finally successful justifies me in part in saying that eloquence won the day. Before I left Li Hung Chang had promised me all I asked for, and more. Returning from China I brought with me official grants of concessions more valuable perhaps than any one had ever obtained. That they are not now being put to practical use is due only to the fact that English capital, through its American agents, has interfered and temporarily prostrated my plans. In the end, however, I am confident that American genius and enterprise and capital will win the day even against British gold and British cunning."

WALTER WELLMAN.

"THE PICKLED WALNUTS."

How an Iconoclast Satirized Some Suburban Fads.

[Special Correspondence.]

MONTCLAIR, N. J., Nov. 17.—Not long ago I took a jaunt out through upper Montclair in order to loosen my joints a bit. I was quite surprised to see such beautiful villas on every hand, and soon learned that this charming suburb is the spot for the man who delights in windmills, reindeer, black swans and peacocks.

And I noticed also that every place had a name after the English fashion. Even houses standing on fifty foot lots were called Skyhurst, Cloudvale, the Cedars, etc. While musing upon the absurdity of a ridiculous fashion I met a man. As he had on a loud checked suit and a single barreled eyeglass I concluded that he must belong in that region.

"Good morning," I said; "do you belong around here?"

"Yes," he replied. "I have belonged around here for something like six years, but I am not going to belong around here longer than the time it will require to get to the station after the moment my lease expires."

"Don't you like the place? It certainly seems very beautiful."

"It is beautiful," replied my friend. "It is altogether too beautiful for me. I want a lonely old fashioned place. You see these intensely English clothes and the eyeglass?"

"I do," I replied.

"Well," he continued, "I detest them, but I have to wear them to match the place in which I live. I also have to cut the horse's tail for the same reason, and I just long to get out of here to get into a homely suit of United States clothing once more, and give the horse's tail a chance to grow long enough to brush the flies off the small of his back."

"The thing I don't like about it," I replied, "is this ridiculous custom of naming the places. Now what sense is there in calling a $5,000 house on a $200 lot 'Cotswold?'"

"Do you know I antagonized every one about here by calling my place—now what do you think I called it?"

"Pine View?" I suggested.

"No; guess once more."

"Hazelhurst?" I ventured to reply.

"No; you are wrong again. I did not call it by any picturesque, misleading name; I called it the Pickled Walnuts. And I gave it this name to burlesque the system of naming small places at all."

"And you say your neighbors didn't like it?"

"They did not, because I painted the name on a stone at the gate. And then, to get even with them, I called the stable Blythedale Terrace, the dog house Nanticon Lodge, and the hennery the Slippery Elms."

"And what did the people say?"

"I don't know what they did not say. I think they are talking yet. And if they are not they will be when they learn that I have called the ramshackle house in which my coachman lives Westminster hall. If you want to live out here you've got to be English from head to foot and wear a single beveled eyeglass and white duck uppers and play cricket. But I'll get out as soon as I can, and when I once more get into a ten dollar suit of clothes, and grow a tail on the horse, I'll apply for papers of American citizenship." Then he passed on, trembling with emotion.

R. K. MUNKITTRICK.

A REMINISCENCE OF PATTI.

Max Maretzek Tells How She Made Her Debut.

[Special Correspondence.]

OMAHA, Nov. 21.—The manager under whom Mme. Patti made her first public appearance says that interesting event took place but a few months short of forty years ago. The man in question is Max Maretzek, whose name is not a familiar one now, but for nearly a third of a century he was one of the best known impresarios in America, and managed the tours of many of the famous singers of other days. Twelve years ago he abandoned hazardous operatic ventures and settled down as a private musical instructor. He continues to enjoy the friendship of the diva, and is not averse to relating the circumstances under which she made her debut.

"It occurred in the spring of 1853," he said to me in a recent interview in this city, "the year following the advent of Jenny Lind in America. At the time I was conducting the Italian Opera company in New York, among whose members were the father, mother, brother and sister of Patti. One day they brought the little girl to me to try her voice. They said she was eight years old, but I remember thinking at the time that she was ten. From that," smilingly, "you can figure the madame's age pretty accurately, but as she doesn't deny her age I don't think she will mind my telling this.

"The little girl sang by ear, but she had a voice which was notable even at that early age. Her songs were mostly popular airs of the day, and several of the Swedish melodies made familiar by Jenny Lind. Our company was giving three operas and one concert each week, and I asked the future diva if she wanted to sing in the concert the following week.

"'Yes, sir. What will you give me?' was her answer, showing, as I have often thought since, that the business instinct was developed in her earliest youth.

"'I will give you that much candy,' I answered, drawing a finger around the edge of the sweatband in my inverted hat.

"She expressed herself as satisfied, and she being a child I of course straightway forgot the pledge, though I intended to make her a little present of some kind. The concerts were given at the old Trippler hall, on Broadway, opposite Bond street, and next door to the Central hotel. When it came Patti's turn to go upon the stage she asked for the candy. I told her I had none and urged her to sing, but she insisted on having her confectionery. I next promised to go out and get some while she sang, but she declined that arrangement. It was late in the evening, and I knew not where to find candy at that hour within convenient distance of the hall, and so, in desperation, I ran into the hotel and asked the cook for some. The cook had none, but suggested offering some little cakes, lady fingers and others with frosting. These satisfied the child, and she went on with her part. She sang several Swedish songs and made a very favorable impression. Every time Mme. Patti visits America we talk over that experience, and she always laughs heartily over it."

FRED BENZINGER.

It Always Makes Him Laugh.

[Special Correspondence.]

SUFFERN, N. Y., Nov. 22.—While walking up and down the piazza of the best hotel in this hustling little place I met a man with long white whiskers, and, queer as it may seem, as soon as our eyes met he burst into a most violent fit of laughter. I naturally felt indignant, as I supposed he was laughing at me. He noticed this and said, by way of apology:

"I was laughing at something that happened up in Delaware county last summer, and every time the memory of it crosses my mind I cannot control the wild desire to laugh; it makes no difference where I am."

"I will forgive you," I remarked, smiling, "if you will tell me all about this queer episode that continually upsets you with mirth."

"Well," he began, "it's all about a mean man who had a flock of geese. He was one of the meanest men who ever lived in Delaware county, and he would do anything to get something for nothing, or rather at the expense of a neighbor. But he ran against the wrong man when he sent his geese into John Smith's corn field to devour the corn he had just planted. He sent the geese in at 4 o'clock one morning, and when Smith saw them cracking their bills into the ground and eating the corn with the rapidity of so many Australian emus he got so mad he didn't know what to do.

"The owner of the geese thought it was a great joke, little believing that the joke was on himself. The man who owned the corn field went into the house and mixed a lot of plaster of paris with some Indian meal and gave it to the geese, and after they had devoured it the whole mass turned into stone inside of them, and when they began to feel uneasy, as if they had eaten green apples, they went to the pond for a swim, and sank like so many rocks and were drowned."

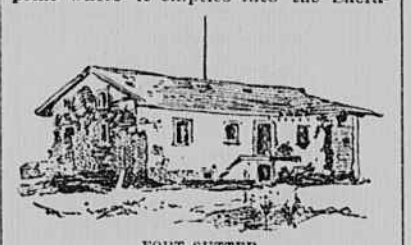
R. K. M.

Old Fort Sutter.

[Special Correspondence.]

SACRAMENTO, Nov. 16.—The work of inclosing California's oldest historical landmark, Fort Sutter, is now going forward. At the last session of the legislature an appropriation of $100,000 was made to be used for the preservation of the fort, which had become almost a ruin through its long exposure to storms and its shaking up by earthquakes.

The building stands on the right bank of the American river, ten miles above the point where it empties into the Sacra-



FORT SUTTER.

mento. It was erected in 1843 by a Swiss gentleman of the name of Sutter, who had won the title of captain in the king's guard at Paris.

Sutter came to California and went into stock raising. He located at New Helvetia and built the fort—for protection against Indians—that afterward became famous. It was over this fort, on the morning of July 11, 1846, that John C. Fremont hoisted the American flag upon receiving information that Commodore Sloat had captured Monterey, an act which ended the "Bear war."

The fort eventually lost its dignity and became a storehouse for hay. During that period of its usefulness the tile roof was taken off and a modern one of shingles and rafters put in its place. Several years ago the building was purchased by the state, and since then it has been unoccupied. The fort will be inclosed in an immense wooden building.

H. M. TOWNES.